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# Future Business Leaders Ethics: American, British, and Egyptian Student Ethics

Ahmad M. Abdelbary

Iowa State University, [am-abdelbary@wiu.edu](mailto:am-abdelbary@wiu.edu)

Robert Bosselman

Iowa State University, [drbob@iastate.edu](mailto:drbob@iastate.edu)

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## **Future Business Leaders Ethics of American, British, and Egyptian Students**

Abdelbary and Bosselman: Future Business Leaders Ethics: American, British, and Egyptian S

This study is designed to explore business ethics of future Egyptian business leaders: with business ethics of American and British future business leaders. Prior research has showed that American students (future business leaders) share similar work and school ethics with British students. Understanding cultural impact on business ethics will enable foreign investors to recruit managers locally, retain employees, increase satisfaction, and cut cost. No differences were noticed between the responses to the ethics scenarios between the American, British and Egyptian students.

Ethics of employees are fundamental to interactions and dealings at work. Ethics are colored by culture and background. Business leaders, especially with the increased diversity of employee's backgrounds, are pushed to understand ethics and culture and its impact to be able to have smoother transactions in the work place where teams work is the hallmark of a stable environment.

The Middle East culture is influenced by religion which influences ethical decisions (Eldeen & Guenena, 1995). Hospitality and tourism represent more than 11% of the Gross Domestic Product of Egypt according to World Trade Organization. Many international corporations operate in Egypt such as hotel chains (Marriot, Accor, intercontinental), restaurants (McDonald, Pizza hut), and computer companies (IBM and Microsoft). Increased international business interactions of Egyptian employees and leaders with foreign investors highlighted the interest in business ethics. This study will investigate the influence of different cultures on school and business ethics.

Cross cultural differences of business ethics between the United Kingdom and the USA were reported by Whipple and Swords (1992). In 2006, Brymer, Wilborn, and Schmidgall reexamined the ethics of students in the USA and Britain using a set of scenarios that dealt with school and work. The close nature of the two cultures was noted and no major differences were reported in that study (Brymer, Wilborn, and Schmidgall, 2006). Brymer, et al.(2006) reported that parents were found to have a big influence on students. Pizam, Pine, Mok, and Shin, (1997) examined the business ethics and behavior of managers in Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea. The assumption was that they are similar and major differences were noted indicating that people

from race and geographic proximity may not have the same national culture and convictions when it comes to work and business (Pizam, Pine, Mok, and Shin, 1997).

The purpose of the current study was to examine the business ethics of Egyptian students ready to graduate and enter the work force and compare them to the published data in 2006 by Brymer, et al. This was prompted by the lack of body of research despite the global nature of business interactions.

Hypothesis:

H1 No difference in the business ethics of Egyptian students will be detected when compared to previously reported responses of students in the USA, and Britain.

H2 Genders does not affect work and school ethics in Egyptian students.

**Methodology:** Three hundred students in Cairo University and Ain shams University located in Cairo were given ten scenarios used by Brymer, et al. (2006) in English accompanied with Arabic translation, and were asked to respond by ethical, unethical, or not a question of ethics. This survey was used because it was not culturally biased or restricted, and the predictability and reliability was established (Brymer, et al., 2006). The scenarios used were designed to understand the process of ethical judgment of Egyptian students with regards to work and school. One hundred and four complete surveys were returned and used in the statistical analysis of the data. Descriptive analysis was performed. Alpha was set at 0.05 for statistical significance, The responses of the Egyptian students were compared to the prior reported patterns of answers of the American and British students using Chi-Square analysis performed using SPSS 18.

**Results:** the demographic data of the one hundred and four students participating in the survey

*International CHRIE Conference-Refereed Track, Event 17 (2016)*

are listed in Table 1. Twice as many females completed the survey. The majority of the students were between the ages of 18 and 29 (87.5%) and were 4<sup>th</sup> year students in college. The majority of the students reported that their parents had finished college.

Table 2 contains the responses of Egyptian students to the ethical scenarios. The findings of the study were compared to prior published data (Brymer, et al. 2006). When students were asked about work scenarios the Egyptian students were different when it came to scenario 1 where the majority of the students in all groups thought that this is not ethical however, more Egyptian students (22 %) thought it was not a question of ethics. Egyptian students answered similarly to the USA students when it came to scenario 2. In scenario 3 Egyptian students were similar to the British students where 36% answered as not a question of ethics while 23% of the American students said that it is not a question of ethics. When analyzing scenario 8 we noted that 45% of Egyptian students thought it was not a question of ethics and 25% of the students thought it was an ethical question which is a major difference noted when compared to the American and British students. Interestingly overall answers were not significantly different amongst the different student groups as shown in figure 1.

When Chi-Square analysis was performed, it became clear that the sample fit the random distribution and that no differences in the responses of the prior reported answers of students in America and Britain when compared to the Egyptian students (Table 3).

Conclusion:

The data analysis supports hypothesis H1 since there are no differences in the ethical

considerations with regards to work or school of Egyptian students when compared with the American and British students. This is interesting since the cultural backgrounds and the ethical standards of the Egyptian culture are heavily influenced by religion and history when compared to the western cultures. This is interesting since Brymer et.al. (2006) showed that the religious affiliations and institutions impacted the beliefs and the ethical values of western students. Our findings suggest that the new generation around the globe form their ethics in a similar manner that is not mostly affected by cultures and mostly affected by family and peers. The majority of the students in the survey reported either one or both parents had college education. Brymer et.al. (2006) found that the most influential factors on the student belief systems and ethics were parents, family, friends, and business courses with ranking of parents as number one in the western culture. Religion and its institutions seem to have the least impact on ethics and belief systems of students (Brymer, et.al., 2006).

Moreover, the data supports H2 because no differences in the responses of female students compared to their male counterparts were noted. These findings were noted in prior studies in other cultures (Hegarty and Sim 1978; Kidwell, Stevens, and Bethker, 1987; Whipple and Swords, 1992). The male dominated society, according to Kattara (2005), suggested that there would be a detected difference, which it was not evident in our sample.

**Limitations:** One of the limitations of this study is the small sample number, and this is a pilot study and we plan to expand the collection of data and include students not only from the political sciences and commerce and consider students in business and other service oriented colleges.

In conducting cross cultural studies, translation of the survey despite the attempts to follow the usual standards, there was difficulty when it came to ethical scenarios because the students found it hard to answer the questions especially when attempted to ask them to think of the answers as just ethical, none ethical or not a question of ethics. The translation of the Arabic language could implement a religious point view or not. It was important to emphasize to the students to ignore the religious direction and answer based on how they were brought up.

The students in the sample were mostly 4<sup>th</sup> year students and their ages were mostly very close since the educational system of Egypt enrolls students almost all within a similar group which would be an added value as well as a possible weakness. Diversity of the age of students would normally impact life experiences which could have resulted in the data we collected. A repeat of this study using managers or other age groups to validate those views is important. A better understanding of factors that influence students and their belief systems is also important and we did not address that and would be important to examine in future research.

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Total N	104	100%
Females (n)	69	66 %
Males (n)	35	34%
Age distribution		
<18	9	8.7%
18-29	91	87.5%
>29	4	3.8%
Parent education:		
One parent has college education	85	81.7 %
Both parents have college education	74	71.2 %

Table 1. Student demographic data

	N	Ethical (%)	Not ethical (%)	NQE (%)
Scenario 1(w)				
Britain	395	12	56	32
USA	217	7	80	13
Egypt	104	3	75	22
Scenario 2(w)	N	%	%	%
Britain	391	16	67	17
USA	208	12	79	9
Egypt	104	9	80	11
Scenario 3(w)	N	%	%	%
Britain	394	19	48	33
USA	217	18	59	23
Egypt	104	11	53	36
Scenario 4 (s)	N	%	%	%
Britain	393	22	36	42
USA	217	25	35	40
Egypt	104	16	47	37
Scenario 5 (s)	N	%	%	%
Britain	392	11	61	28
USA	218	9	79	12

Egypt	104	8	90	2
Scenario 6 (s)	N	%	%	%
Britain	394	11	73	16
USA	218	10	83	7
Egypt	104	13	80	7
Scenario 7(s)	N	%	%	%
Britain	393	19	37	44
USA	218	8	35	57
Egypt	104	20	36	44
Scenario 8(w)	N	%	%	%
Britain	387	15	66	19
USA	216	13	68	19
Egypt	104	25	30	45
Scenario 9(w)	N	%	%	%
Britain	393	11	77	12
USA	216	11	79	10
Egypt	104	8	82	10
Scenario 10(s)	N	%	%	%
Britain	394	12	68	20
USA	217	9	84	7
Egypt	104	11	60	29
<b>Overall</b>	N	%	%	%
Britain		15	59	26

USA		12	68	20
Egypt		12	64	24
<b>Work Scenarios</b>		%	%	%
Britain		15	63	22
USA		12	73	15
Egypt		11	64	25
<b>Student Scenarios</b>		%	%	%
Britain		15	55	26
USA		12	63	25
Egypt		14	63	23

Table 2. Student evaluation of scenarios, Scenarios 1,2,3,8,and 9 related to work ethics (w) and scenarios 4,5,6,7,and 10 are related to school (s). NQE=not a question of ethics

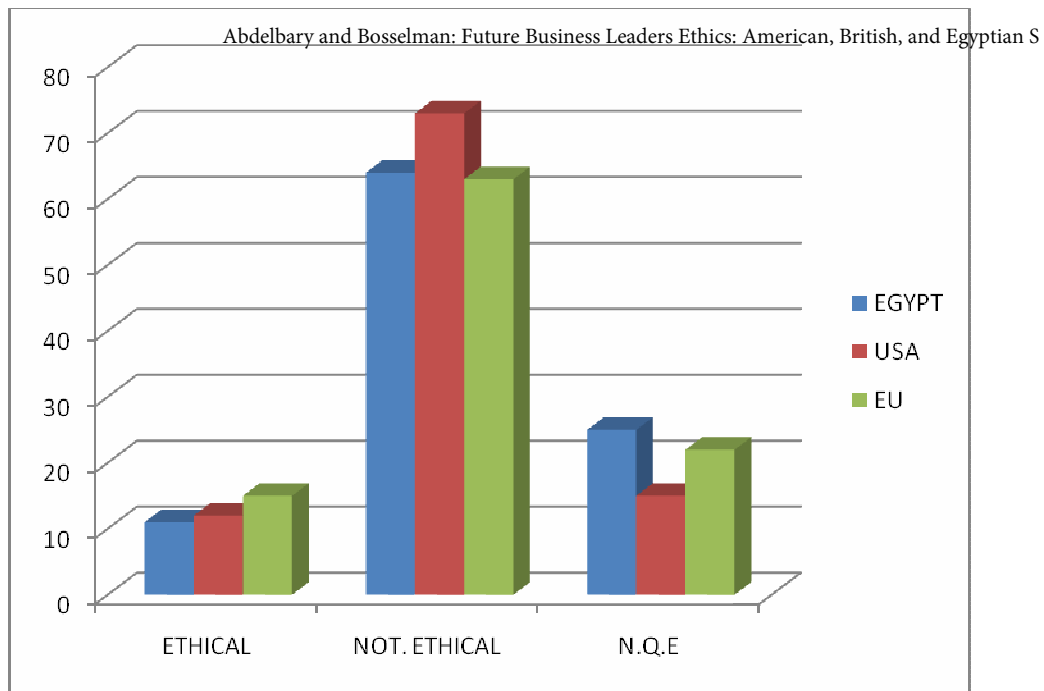


Figure 1. Comparison of total percentage of answers of students in Egypt, USA, and Europe, y axis represents a percentage

Scenario	Pearson Chi-Square value	Pearson Chi-Square <i>df</i>	Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	
Scenario 1	44.143(a)	4	0.00	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.44.
Scenario 2	13.896(a)	4	0.008	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.35.
Scenario 3	12.699(a)	4	0.013	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.18
Scenario 4	6.679(a)	4	0.154	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count

	Abdelbary and Bosselman: Future	Business Leaders Ethics: American, British, and Egyptian S		is 22.54
Scenario 5	52.040(a)	4	0.000	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.34
Scenario 6	78.276(a)	4	0.000	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.87
Scenario 7	18.171(a)	4	0.001	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.46
Scenario 8	53.011(a)	4	0.000	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.48
Scenario 9	2.045(a)	4	0.728	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count



	<i>International CHRIE Conference-Refereed Track, Event 17 [2010]</i>			is 10.86
Scenario 10	31.187(a)	4	0.000	a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.35

Table 3: Summary of the SPSS 18 of Chi-Square analysis